

THE ROMANCE OF DU BARRY

An Historical Novel Descriptive of a Most Fascinating Period and Personality in French History

—BY—
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Creator of the character La Du Barry
in David Belasco's play "Du Barry."

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

In the first chapters, published on Sunday, November 9, is narrated the baptism and early childhood life of the future Madame du Barry in the French capital town of Valenciennes. In the tale of the Marquis de Grammont, who was born and reared in the same vicinity, is foretold the strange destiny of the heroine. At the age of six she meets Louis XV, who visits Valenciennes on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Jean de Coignol and as his child. Upon leaving Valenciennes the girl is installed in the Parisian convent of Sainte Anne, where she remains seven years.

On Sunday, November 16, is narrated the historical meeting between Jeanette and the future king. This scene is set in an amusing experience with a hair-dresser named Lametz. She returns home to her father, who tells her mother that she has engaged herself as an assistant to Monsieur Laville in his saloon.

With Duval she has her first love affair, which is almost idyllic, and which gives a glimpse of the true character of the girl. It ends with a letter which she writes Duval from the chateau de Cour-Neuve, where she has become a companion to Mme. La Garde. Two sons of this woman fall in love with Jeanette with disastrous consequences.

Jeanette accompanies Mme. La Garde to the house of the Marquis de Grammont and gets her first glimpse of the fashionable society of the period, with all its pomp and glitter. While driving from Cour-Neuve in the evening the two women have a remarkable meeting with a stranger—the man who had told her fortune in the town of Fontainebleau. During the journey at the chateau of Grammont, Jeanette meets the Comte Jean du Barry, who invites her to his home—a Temple of Chance.

Du Barry is depicted as a soldier of fortune for whom life was a game to be either lost or won with nonchalance. His house was a palace. Jeanette finds herself in a wonderful—a seventeenth century—Temple of Chance. Many of the most beautiful women of the day were present, and only lent a further attractiveness to a scene which to her seemed like a strange theater that had been summoned up by some mysterious influence—a wonderful drama being played in the twilight of the gods.

Engaged in a game with Du Barry, she turns the highest card and wins an interest in a certain Corsican venture. She promises to visit Versailles and see the prime minister regarding this Corsican business and the money which he scrupulously observed.

There follows a description of the daily life of Louis XV with all the extravagant ceremony and etiquette by which he was surrounded, and which he scrupulously observed. Jeanette goes to Versailles a few mornings after winning an interest in the Corsican business from Du Barry. The soldier of fortune sent his carriage for her at Cour-Neuve and had her stop at his residence in the town of Valenciennes. On arriving at Versailles she is consigned to the hands of the Prime Minister in the room of audiences, and is the means of drawing the anger of the King down on Choiseul, the mediocrity of whom she has just met. Not knowing that Louis XV had overheard him.

Jeanette attracts the notice of the King as he passes from the ante-chamber. She is followed by Lefebvre and Richelieu to the house of Du Barry, where they parley with him about the future favorite. It is arranged that she is to meet his majesty at a masquerade dinner in the Lebel apartments at Versailles.

This remarkable dinner follows that evening—with the wits of Paris and courtiers and ladies of Versailles congregated. All Paris has been attracted to furnish forth this feast at the Palace.

At the height of the mad revel the Baron de Grammont enters the banquet hall and engages Jeanette in conversation. She tells him eventually—amid the silence of the company—the history of the evening she was wearing and of her first meeting with the King in Valenciennes. All this is disclosed with frequent interruptions from those who are participating in the wonderful revel.

Many and diverse temperaments were represented in the assembly, but in Mme. Du Barry is epitomized most of the women. She finds philosophy boring and only considers as worth while lace, perfume, gold, silk, and things that sparkle and give power a meaning. Such was the environment which molded and made Jeanette Vaubernier. At the close of the very long Du Barry and his companion were smiling when they left—the woman of destiny because a royal diamond earring was fastened on her ear, and the soldier of fortune because a new star was twinkling over the Court.

A few days later began the intrigue between the Choiseuls and their enemies, which was to end in the downfall of the Prime Minister of the Favorite.

This chapter of intrigue was begun with a meeting between the Duc de Choiseul, the Duke of Grammont, and the Lieutenant of Police in the ministerial cabinet at Versailles. Monsieur de Sartines—the Argus of Paris—being admitted to the room by a secret door, informs Du Choiseul that Jeanette is not related to Du Barry, as the latter had represented, and that in consequence the King had been foolishly deceived.

Meanwhile in another quarter of the palace the Favorite and Du Barry were discussing the famous Bourbonnais vases which had just appeared in the "Nouvelles a la Main" and were the occasion of provoking laughter over Paris at the expense of Jeanette and the King. Du Barry decides and informs Jeanette that she must be married at once to forestall their ruin. Lefebvre appeared on the scene and Jeanette said that unless something was done to satisfy the Choiseuls that things were what they seemed, the game was up. After a lengthy parley both Du Barry and Lefebvre withdrew before the King entered. Louis advanced to the mantelpiece where "Nouvelles a la Main" had been placed by Jeanette and immediately read the offending verses. Spurred to anger by Jeanette he rushed for an attendant and ordered the Duc de la Vrilliere, minister of state and a notorious tool of the Choiseuls, to appear before him. Upon Du Barry's appearance the king's anger was cooled, which Louis warned the under secretary to treat Mademoiselle Vaubernier with every consideration and with deference in the future. When the crystalline de la Vrilliere had withdrawn the King dispatched a message to the lieutenant of police commanding him at the risk of his royal displeasure in case of dereliction to see that promiscuous writings such as the Bourbonnais verses be stopped.

In the next chapter Jeanette and Jean du Barry write his brother—the Comte Guillaume du Barry—in Valenciennes on the Garonne River to proceed to Paris, where he was to marry Mademoiselle Vaubernier and bid her adieu at the Church of Saint Laurent. While Guillaume was writing the letter he overheard the Choiseuls, who had gone to Gascony to continue a private vendetta of the marriage—overheard the letter read. He affronted Guillaume and they fought a duel in the public room of the tavern. Du Barry was discomfited, and went packing back to Paris. During the same day he was followed by the Comte Guillaume du Barry.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Trianon.

WHEN Louis the Fifteenth had built Versailles, and felt the inconvenience of grandeur; when he saw the immense salons full of guards, the ante-rooms thronged with courtiers, the corridors and entrees crowded with footmen, pages and officers, he said to himself that Versailles was indeed what Louis the Fifteenth had planned, and what Mansard, Le Brun and Le Notre had executed—the dwelling of a deity, but not of a man. Then the grand monarch, who designed to be a man in his leisure moments, built Trianon that he might breathe more freely, delivered from the oppressive magnificence of Versailles.

But the villa of a deity is the castle of a man, and the grand Trianon, which was an excellent fit for Louis the elder,

was cut at least three ells too large for his successor.

Trianon, the shadow cast by Versailles when the sun sank behind its turrets, seemed still too pompous for Louis the Well Beloved, who caused the Petit Trianon, a fairy pavilion, some sixty feet square, to be erected by the architect Gabriel.

To the left of this building was an oblong square structure, without character and without ornament—the dwelling of the servants and officers of the royal household. It contained about ten lodgings for masters and accommodated about sixty servants.

The building still remains entire and is composed of a ground floor, a second story and attic. The ground floor is protected by a paved moat which separates it from the planting, and all the windows in it, as well as those on the second floor, are grated. On the side looking toward Trianon the windows open from a long corridor like those of a convent.

Eight or nine doors opening from the same corridor give admittance to the different suites of apartments, each consisting of an anteroom and two closets, one to the left, the other to the right, and of one, and sometimes two, underground apartments, looking upon the inner court of the building. The upper story contained the kitchens, besides the attics and the chambers of the domestics. So much for the Petit Trianon.

Add to this a chapel, about six or seven perches from the chateau, a description of which shall not burden the reader because it is too small to deserve more than passing notice.

So it will be seen that the topography of the establishment is somewhat as follows: A chateau, looking with its glassy eyes upon a park and a wood, in front, and on the left, looking toward the offices, which present to its gaze only the barred windows of the corridor and the thickly trellised ones of the kitchens above.

The path leading from the greater to the lesser Trianon was through a small fruit garden which connected the two residences by means of a wooden bridge.

While the Chevalier de Coignol was passing through St. Cyr, a brief league from Paris, on the second morning after his encounter with the Comte Guillaume du Barry, Mademoiselle Vaubernier and a female companion were enjoying a morning walk through this garden. It was quite early in the day, and the garden appeared to be deserted entirely save for the figures of the two solitary women. Since coming to Versailles, Jeanette had found a favorite diversion in arising early and strolling through the secluded bit of woodland and along the parterres of the garden.

It was at this hour that she seemed to throw off the restraints imposed upon her by palace etiquette and become the natural woman who had so attracted the monarch in the beginning. Jeanette was listening attentively to a story which her companion was relating. In Champagne, between Montargis and Joigny, there stood an old chateau named Parc Vieil, the residence of the Comte and Comtesse de Louesme. For some generations back the family had been gradually treading the downward slope, and of late the Comte de Louesme had become hopelessly involved in debt.

The leeches of the law had fastened upon his dwindled possessions and left them pale and vitiated. Finally a creditor named Dorcy had deputed two huissiers to serve the nobleman with a writ of execution.

Resistance had evidently been anticipated, since the bailiffs took with them a detachment of gendarmes who surrounded the chateau at an early hour of the morning. Similar to many of the ancient chateaux, Parc Vieil was protected by a deep fosse. The drawbridge had long since succumbed under the weight of time and the fosse was bridged by rough beams of wood, which the scanty garrison pulled up every evening.

The huissiers and their aides summoned the comte and his household to surrender, and then, having contrived to cross the moat, began an attack upon the doors. The household offered a spirited resistance to these summary proceedings, and the engagement became general. At last the representatives of the law were beaten off, leaving two of their number dead on the field—an huissier and a soldier of the maréchaussee.

The old warrior, thoroughly aroused, had made no attempt to fly, but strengthened the defenses, posted sentinels, and awaited events. Two days passed, and on the morning of the third a small army appeared under the walls of the chateau. It consisted of the maréchaussee, or gendarmes, of the neighboring towns, and a goodly sprinkling of peasants who had been called upon to support the authorities. The siege began, but in the opening fusillade an old retainer of the De Louesme family fell, and the garrison

surrendered. All the inhabitants of the chateau—nine in number—were taken prisoners and marched to execution. Sentence had been pronounced on the unfortunate family and was to be carried out on the following day.

Having heard the story thus far and observing that her companion—Mademoiselle Henriette, a remote member of the De Louesme family—was now silent, Jeanette inquired if nothing could be done for the unfortunates.

"Ah!" sighed her companion.

"Ah?" Ah is no answer.

"Perhaps something can be done—but it must be done by some one who can prevail upon his majesty to give them a respite."

"But whom can we get with enough influence to intercede for them?" asked Jeanette.

"Does mademoiselle not know?"

"No."

"Is there any favor which his majesty could deny one whom he so admires as yourself?" was the naive response.

"Henriette! Do you think the King would listen to me? No, no. He has expressly charged me never to meddle with public affairs."

"Then mademoiselle will pardon me for mentioning the subject at all," replied the disappointed girl.

"Dear Henriette! You reproach me."

"Indeed, no! I only thought—"

"You only thought—"

"That it might be possible for you to mention the matter to his majesty in a casual way," continued the other.

"They are related to you—these people?"

"Distinctly. But more nearly to the Comtesse de Moyon."

"Yes?"

"Surely you knew the Comte and Comtesse de Louesme were—"

"Well?"

"Her parents."

"Are you serious? Poor Comtesse de Moyon! What distress she must be in!"

"She is—"

"Yes?"

"Petitioning the chancellor to at least commute the sentence to imprisonment."

"Maupeou is well disposed, Henriette. So perhaps things are not as dark as they seem."

"And yet—"

"Do go on."

"Only his majesty can act in the matter. My lord chancellor can only intercede for them."

"Pray, then, do not worry any longer, my friend. Something must and will be done for them."

"A thousand thanks, mademoiselle, a thousand thanks," cried the girl, dropping on her knees and clasping Jeanette by the hand.

"Foolish child," objected the other, vainly trying to release her hand and striving to conceal the tears gathering in her eyes.

"Dear mademoiselle," continued the girl, "they say that you are extravagant and—and it is not true at all."

"Ah! They say. Tell me what they say, Henriette. It must be interesting if good things are so uninteresting."

"They say—" continued Henriette, blushing and still hesitating.

"It is probably no worse than has already appeared in the 'Gazette.' So do not be afraid."

"Why—that is what I was going to tell you. Have you read all those outrageous things in the 'Gazette'?"

"Ah, yes," was the response, "all of them; because my good friend, the Duc de Choiseul, takes excellent care that they shall reach my eyes. But we must forget them in remembering the De Louesmes," she continued, growing more serious as she recalled the approaching fate of the family.

"Really such bad verses are not worth remembering," eagerly agreed the girl. Perhaps it is only the very young who are so entirely loyal on short acquaintance.

Jeanette did not reply at once. She was thinking.

"Only at some risk may we intercede for the De Louesmes just now," she remarked at length, half to herself and half to her companion. Then continuing:

"His majesty is in an execrable mood today."

"Then tomorrow—but tomorrow will be too late," recollected the girl with a sigh.

"His majesty is very angry with me."

"Angry—with you?"

"This morning he entered my boudoir unannounced—think of it—and saw me rousing by face. He has a horror of rouge."

"But, mademoiselle," replied the girl, with an envious glance at the complexion of the other, "why do you rouge your face?"

"Why? Because it pleases me to do so. Why else?"

"When his majesty disapproves of it?"

"My dear Henriette," responded Jeanette, laughing gaily at the incredulous expression of her companion, "you will never learn to please the King if you

do exactly as he likes. He is wearied to death with adulation. But now we must return to the chateau before you learn any more important secrets from me this morning." But neither of them was aware that the Duchesse de Grammont and Madame de Brionne had approached from behind and had overheard the last speech. They were soon reminded of the fact by hearing madame la duchesse addressing her companion in a sarcastic tone:

"Was there ever such arrogance?"

"They say she tried hard enough to find a husband."

"A title, you mean."

"Both."

"They really say his majesty is becoming left-handed."

"Why?"

"He does not give her his right hand."

"But he hardly knows her. She was—who was she a year ago?"

"Surely you have heard."

"No."

"A demoiselle de compagnie."

Both women laughed at this. But madame la duchesse quickly stifled her mirth and remarked reprovingly:

"I wonder you do not blush to repeat the word."

"Really, the past month has quite left me blushing penniless," returned Madame de Brionne.

They were now passing close to the object of their remarks and could not refrain from glancing at her to note the effect of the words. Neither of them reckoned on her accepting the gaze with such evident composure. Without changing countenance but raising her voice so as to be overheard by her persecutors, the favorite retorted:

"As his majesty blushed this morning on repeating a certain amusing anecdote at the expense of the Duchesse de Grammont."

Something—perhaps the knowledge concealed in the innuendo—flashed on the proud woman like lightning out of a clear sky. She trembled violently and turned pale, but pretended not to have heard the retort as she passed on with Madame de Brionne.

When they were beyond hearing, Jeanette continued, suddenly changing the subject and addressing the girl:

"As for the poor Comte and Comtesse de Louesme, who are sentenced to execution tomorrow, if such a petition as mine can avail it will be the first favor of my asking that the King has granted."

"Really, mademoiselle! Do not ask it then—for my sake only."

"For their own then. Persons who live in palaces so often forget the misfortunes of others."

"How wise you are—and pretty!"

"Silly child. It is simply because they do not care to inform themselves."

"And you?"

"Already know—having been a poor girl myself."

While Jeanette was speaking Madame la Duchesse and her companion were passing into the chateau. Observing the fact she concluded with a sigh of relief:

"So they have gone. How soon we learn to howl in the society of volves."

"Volves?"

"Indeed."

"When everything here is so grand?"

"Yes. And grand things are always expensive, my dear, as Monsieur Terray remarked to his majesty the other day. Ciel! I suppose envy is one of the prices of grandeur. So if we pay the usurers in their own coin they can have no just cause to complain."

"Very perplexing!"

"Very."

They had continued their promenade and were now opposite the Isle d'Amour when their conversation was interrupted by a sudden baying of hounds, and presently by the King appearing at a turn in the path. He was taking his morning walk in the park with his favorites, companions—four magnificent dogs.

One of the huge animals rushed up and began playfully bounding at Henriette, much to her dismay.

"Down, Blanche, down!" commanded the King, observing the discomfiture of the girl.

The perfectly trained animal obeyed immediately and ran fawning to her master. Louis was to declare on his deathbed that his favorite dogs would mourn him more sincerely than any of his subjects.

"Mademoiselle has just been enjoying her walk," he pleasantly commented to Jeanette.

"Enjoying is hardly the word, sire. I have been hearing a most harrowing story."

"Indeed! I also have had my morning spoiled by Maupeou and Madame la Comtesse de Moyon worrying me about a family in Champagne."

"Sire!" Jeanette had bowed her head and made a deep obeisance to his majesty.

"Ha! The roses fade in your cheeks, mademoiselle. Haply the morning air at Versailles is too severe."

His glance was rewarded by seeing the

"Sire, I have a favor to ask." Louis glanced at her keenly.

"Our effort has been to anticipate what mademoiselle wishes. But it seems that we have failed."

"Your majesty has always been thoughtful."

"And this favor that you have in mind?"

"Is that you will be generous."

"Your speeches do not agree."

"Will you grant my favor?"

"As mademoiselle has given me no opportunity to judge what manner of favor she expects, it is hardly a fair question," replied Louis, adroitly evading a direct answer.

"But will you?"

"Perhaps it is already granted."

"Really, sire?"

"The brooch which the Parisian jeweler was exhibiting to us yesterday?"

"Do not attribute it to ingratitude nor to my not valuing any gift that comes from your majesty, but grant me another favor in place of it, sire."

"Do you mean—"

"I ask for the lives of the Comte and Comtesse de Louesme," murmured Jeanette, kneeling at the feet of the King.

"Mon Dieu! Will those precious law-breakers haunt me to my grave? Besides, mademoiselle, the thing you ask is impossible."

"Impossible? Is anything impossible for the King of France?"

"Nothing but what you ask."

"It is only mercy that I ask."

"They have committed murder."

"No; they only defended themselves from persecution."

"Ha! Who was your informant?"

"This young girl. She implores your clemency."

"It is what the Comtesse de Moyon asked—but I am powerless to act."

"Then I shall go with my petition to the Duc de Choiseul," replied the darling woman, starting to rise. An angry flush passed over the face of the King.

"Think you De Choiseul is master here?" he demanded, sharply.

"When your majesty is powerless to relieve two simple and unfortunate victims of a conspiracy."

"Mademoiselle, it is impossible—"

"Again, that foolish word, when you—"

"It is impossible for me to deny such a charming petitioner," continued the King. "Rise, mademoiselle; your place is not at my feet, but at my side. I shall instruct my lord chancellor to grant the Comte and Comtesse de Louesme a reprieve pending a further investigation."

"My King!"

heavy curtain pushed aside by a jeweled hand which motioned to the watcher and then let the curtain fall back to its place.

The watcher stifled a prodigious yawn and resumed his position in the shadow. Once or twice he withdrew deeper into the gloom as a solitary sentinel came in sight a hundred paces or so away. But as the guardsmen faced about each time and disappeared round a corner toward the main entrance of the palace, he emerged and resumed his watch on each occasion.

Presently a small door opening on the courtyard turned on its hinges with a ghostly creak, and a heavily veiled woman appeared. This door was connected by a secret passage with the former apartments of the royal princes.

The woman cast a furtive glance about her without at first discovering the figure lurking in the shadow. But the man now advanced from his place of concealment with noiseless tread and greeted the new arrival.

"Mordi!" he exclaimed, with a wry face, "I have been waiting since the dawn of creation. What has kept you so long?"

"Really, I o'clock was the time we were to leave here, and we will be expected for another hour at least."

"We cannot cover the distance to Paris in less than an hour and a half, and one Tartuffe will either be drowning his impatience in wine or insulting every passing peacock in hope of whiling away the interval with the tipstaves."

"A very promising picture you draw of him!"

"Alas!"

"But he will surely be there?"

"At five."

"Promptly?"

"As a creditor."

"Are you sure you have been discreet?"

"Mum as an oyster, upon my word."

"Suppose we should be discovered," she said, glancing around.

"Have no fear on that score."

"But if we should?"

"My will is made."

"And signed?" smiled she under her veil.

"With my left hand."

"No doubt."

"My right is ready to assist you to the carriage standing in the avenue yonder. But, sh!"

This warning exclamation was occasioned by the guardsman again appearing at the corner of the palace on his monotonous patrol. When the coast had again become clear the couple made their way to the adjacent thoroughfare and the facade, into which the man followed the woman, and they were soon driving rapidly toward Paris.

As for the actors in this scene: Since early dawn the